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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/S, PRM/AFR, CA/OCS/ACS/AF

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SUBJECT: Ambassador's Tour d'Western Horizon

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Zambia's Central and Western provinces offer great capacity for growth and development but continue to struggle with a lack of good governance, deficiencies in infrastructure, and the unresolved status of refugees. Ambassador met with Amcit entrepreneurs and activists, local leaders, and refugees and highlighted USG health and education initiatives via media outreach in the region October 27-29. End summary.

American Firm is Largest Micro-Financer in Zambia

¶2. (SBU) Located in Mumbwa, Central Province, the American-owned Dunavant Cotton Gin buys cotton entirely from small-scale Zambian farmers, providing much-needed capital in the region and employment for 36 permanent and 340 seasonal workers. Dunavant is the largest ginner in Zambia, providing 100,000 Zambian farmers with quality control training and input financing, making it the largest micro-financer in the country. The company's technical director expressed frustration to Ambassador that Chinese competitors do not provide micro-financing but will then buy up cotton from farmers who received input financing from Dunavant. Dunavant is pressing for a Cotton Act that would require all ginneries to make input loans in order to promote expanded production.

¶3. (SBU) The company has partnered with the Gates Foundation to support farmer training. Falling cotton prices have led to a decrease in production to 100,000 tons of seed cotton - half of what it was in 2005, the technical director remarked. Nevertheless, he noted, Dunavant is working aggressively to win farmers back to cotton production, promoting the marketing label "Cotton Made in Africa."

Mayukwayukwa Refugee Camp - Laboring On

¶4. (SBU) The oldest refugee camp in Zambia, Mayukwayukwa houses over 9,000 Angolans, along with approximately 300 Congolese, 100 Rwandans, and 100 Burundians. The camp resembles a typical Zambian village rather than an organized camp. Many of the ostensibly Angolan inhabitants, some of whom are the children and grandchildren of Angolan refugees who first arrived in the late 1960s, have little knowledge of or connection to Angola. The Ambassador witnessed UNHCR-supported programs that provide agriculture and other job training, and a skit performed by camp youth that educates people about gender-based violence and human trafficking. Inhabitants struggle with sub-standard housing during the rainy season and a lack of employment options given the tight restrictions on passes to leave the camp. While relations between refugees and local Zambians are generally amicable, during a later meeting with the Ambassador, the Provincial Permanent Secretary blamed the refugees for bringing diseased animals into Zambia and thus ruining the cattle-raising

industry in Western Province.

15. (SBU) The Ambassador met with a group of about 100 refugees who will be returning to Angola by the end of this year. One refugee noted he was encouraged to return after hearing from the Angolan ambassador in Zambia that the country is now safe. (Note: Although the Angolan civil war ended in 2002, refugees lack hard information about the situation they would face upon return to eastern Angola). The Embassy's joint press release with UNHCR, noting USG support for refugee programs and the need to find a permanent solution for the refugees, received favorable press coverage.

Mongu Amcits - Grateful for Attention, Critical of Provincial Government

16. (SBU) The American community in Mongu comprises priests and nuns in the Roman Catholic church, Baptist missionaries, and young adults working for NGOs, including the daughter of a U.S. Congressman and the daughter of a U.S. Senator's senior staffer. The community expressed great appreciation for the Ambassador's visit to the remote area, for the Embassy's consular assistance in past medical emergencies involving American citizens, and for the Embassy's work in development projects. Vice Consul briefed the community on the Consular Section's new outreach efforts and assisted several citizens with registering as overseas voters. Long-time Amcit residents noted that the local police are more problem than help, and reported that corruption is rampant in the area.

17. (SBU) Ambassador met separately with Amcit Catholic Bishop Paul

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Duffy, who is outspoken on issues of governance and corruption. (Note: The Roman Catholic Church plays a prominent role in provincial development projects, partnering with the U.S. African Development Foundation (USADF), and promoting press freedom through Catholic-owned Radio Liseli. End note). Duffy confided that many Zambian bureaucrats and community leaders have encouraged him to keep speaking out when they are unable to do so for fear of retribution. He opined that Western Province must be the most corrupt province in Zambia. "If it is not," he said, "Zambia is in real trouble." As an example of corruption in the province, he cited the 65 bore holes paid for by the government as the first step in a development of a new commercial farm bloc, but none of which, upon field inspection, could be found.

18. (SBU) Duffy noted that women have few opportunities in the province under patriarchal Lozi tribal society. Turning to the refugee camp where he is active, he lamented that everyone born in Zambia gets citizenship except children of refugees -- even children of Zambian mothers and refugee fathers do not get citizenship.

19. (SBU) In a Radio Liseli interview conducted by a Fulbright nominee, the Ambassador highlighted USG health and education initiatives in the region as well as the importance of good government. The station manager of Radio Liseli noted at a separate meeting that the station has also highlighted corruption issues, even at the risk of displeasure from the provincial government.

Senanga District Clinic - Successful Community Involvement in PMTCT

110. (SBU) The Ambassador visited the Nanjuca rural health center in Senanga District and officially handed over a laboratory provided by the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) through a co-operative agreement between U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Western Province medical office of the Ministry of Health. This laboratory serves the local community (population 5,419) as well as distant surrounding areas and is an example of decentralized strengthening of the health system to improve quality of care, especially for HIV, TB, and malaria. The HIV prevalence among adults 15-49 in Western Province is 15.2%, which is higher than the national average of 14.3%. The Ambassador

stressed the need for community leadership to strengthen HIV prevention. Through an innovative program led by local area chiefs (indunas) and the facility health committee, the rate of testing of male partners of pregnant women increased from 36% in the first quarter to 83.6% in the third quarter, strengthening the impact of the prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT) program.

Agriculture Potential Unmet

¶11. (SBU) Local interlocutors noted that Western Province has very fertile ground but agricultural production is far below potential. Mango trees grow abundantly, but there is insufficient infrastructure to get the produce to markets outside the province. Likewise, cashew nuts are plentiful in the province, but the one cashew-processing factory closed down a few years ago following privatization of the parastatal company. Capitalizing on a common belief that rice from Mongu tastes better than other rice, a USADF-funded project with the Diocese of Mongu Development Center (DMDC) is helping to develop the Mongu Rice brand. It is currently sold in Lusaka and elsewhere in Zambia at a small premium over other rice, and the company has received interest from buyers in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The USG contributes over USD 1 million to support rice production in Zambia. [Comment: Ironically, the DMDC is seeking to begin rice-polishing as a way to add value to the output, even though in doing so, a less healthy product is produced for consumption. Wealthier Zambians tend to perceive more highly processed foods as a mark of development. End comment]. The DMDC noted that local farmers could have a second season of rice production in the dry season, but only with significant investment in irrigation.

¶12. (SBU) USAID funds a number of projects in Western Province aimed at increasing agricultural output and reducing the area's exposure to natural disasters. The Ambassador toured a project to clear colonial-era canals built by the Lozi Royal Establishment when the province was still known as Barotseland. The cleared canals will reduce flood risk and open up 2600 hectares of farmland. At the same time, USAID projects train farmers in organic farming, using manure and natural insect repellents such as shallots in place of chemicals.

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Westward Expansion

¶13. Comment: Projects such as the DMDC Mongu Rice cooperative and Dunavant Cotton Gin highlight the region's agricultural potential. Likewise, the Nanjuca Rural Health Center shows how a relatively small investment in local health can pay significant dividends. However, progress in Western Province is hindered by poor governance, a lack of infrastructure, and the unresolved status of long-term refugees. End comment.

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